

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A drying method for drying a coating layer which is formed by coating a moving web with a coating solution containing organic solvent, comprising steps of:

transporting ~~almost vertically and upward~~ said web upwardly with 60°-90° inclination to a horizontal direction immediately after the coating;

inclining with one or larger number of guide rollers the upward transporting of said web from ~~an almost vertical direction~~ said 60°-90° inclination toward a horizontal direction gradually; and

drying said coating layer with a drying device having a casing ~~which surrounds in which~~ said web enters at said 60°-90° inclination ~~just after the coating while disturbance of wind close to a coating surface is prevented, and concentration of said solvent vapor in a side of a surface of said coating layer is kept high.~~

2. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein said one ~~or plural~~ or larger number of guide rollers are disposed within said drying device.

3. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~said transporting direction is directed upwardly with 60°-90° inclination to a horizontal direction,~~ and said coating surface is positioned upside.

4. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein a velocity of said wind inside said drying device is less than 0.1 m/s ~~in a situation in which~~ when the transport of said web is stopped.

5. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein said coating layer is further dried by a heat-drying means disposed downstream from said drying device.

6. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein an interval between a coating position and ~~said~~ a first guide roller of said guide rollers disposed closest to said coating position, and being within said drying device, ~~relative said transporting direction of said web~~ is less than 2m from said coating position.

7. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 6, wherein other guide rollers disposed downstream from said first guide roller are disposed with at most a 2m interval.

8. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein an entrance of said drying device is disposed within 0.7m ~~after the coating~~ from a coating position.

9. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein [[a]] at least one device for condensing and recovering said organic solvent in said coating solution on said coating surface is at ~~said~~ a transporting position of said web within said drying device.

10. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 9, wherein a ~~plate-like~~ plate-shaped member is used for said device for condensing and recovering.

11. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 9, wherein each said device for condensing and recovering is disposed in a space formed by partitioning an inside of said drying device with said guide rollers.

12. (currently amended) A drying method claimed in claim 10, wherein said ~~plate-like~~ plate-shaped member is provided for a cooling apparatus, and a temperature of said ~~plate~~ plate-shaped member is adjustable with ~~use~~ employment of said cooling apparatus.

13. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 10, wherein a flow path in which said condensed organic solvent flows ~~in effect of gravity~~ is provided on a surface of said ~~plate-like~~ plate-shaped member.

14. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein side plates are disposed on ~~both~~ two sides of said drying device, or said sides are tightly closed so as to prevent said solvent vapor from said coating layer from flowing out of ~~said both sides of~~ said drying device.

15. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein a content of said organic solvent in said coating solution is at least 50% by mass.

16. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein said drying device dries at least 70% by mass of said organic solvent contained in said coating solution.

17. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein there is a heating device in a side of a non-coating surface of a transport position of said web within said ~~drier~~ drying device.

18. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein a thickness of said ~~wet~~ coating layer is at most 50 μm prior to drying.

19. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein an extrusion die coater is used to apply said coating solution on said web supported by a back-up ~~member~~ roller.

20. (currently amended) [[A]] The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein at least a wire bar coater or a ~~graver~~ gravure coater is used to apply said coating solution on said web.

21-41. (canceled)

42. (new) The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein the inclination is 75° - 89° .

43. (new) The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein the inclination is 75° - 88° .

44. (new) The drying method claimed in claim 1, wherein the guide rollers define transport angle θ_1 at an entrance of the

drying apparatus, θ_2 in a casing of the drying apparatus and θ_3 at an exit of the drying apparatus.

45. (new) The drying method claimed in claim 44,
wherein:

$$60^\circ \leq \theta_3 \leq \theta_2 \leq \theta_1 \leq 90^\circ.$$

46. (new) The drying method claimed in claim 44,
wherein:

$$\theta_3 < \theta_1.$$